

KGBSD STEM Success!

Ketchikan Charter School had an incredible Robotics season this year! Our 5 teams of 4th-8th graders all did tremendously well competing in 3 separate competitions, all the way to the state level! This year's theme was 'Submerged', where students focused on problems related to undersea research and exploration, and how they could improve them. Our season ran between August 26th, 2024 and February 1st, 2025. From the start of the season, our 5 teams worked separately to determine which problems they should research solutions for. These ranged from reducing ocean plastic pollution by utilizing more biodegradable materials like kelp-based plastics, to being inspired by the OceanGate Titan disaster and working to build a better submersible. At the same time members were building and programming their LEGO robot to navigate this year's set of mission obstacles. On December 7, Ketchikan Charter School teams Dory the Explorers, Underwater Rizzlers, Galactic Jellies, Rainbow Robbers, and Smelly Feet Dogs competed against PACE/Fast Track's Sharks, Squid Squad, and Mantarays in a local scrimmage.

This competition is normally where our season ends, however this year PACE/ Fast Track reached out to Ketchikan Charter School about attending the official FIRST LEGO League Remote Regional Qualifier on January 18th, 2025. Interested members of the middle school teams, Galactic Jellies and Dory the Explorers, joined forces to form the Galactic Dories; and alongside the Rainbow Robbers Pt. 2 competed against teams in Cordova and Sleetmute. PACE/ Fast Track was unfortunately unable to attend. Here the Galactic Dories won the Robot Game and Robot Design awards, and received an invitation to the state competition, the Alaska Robot Rendezvous!

Ketchikan Charter School Robotics Coaches Jacob Alguire and Jeremy Minshall, with parent chaperones, took the 4 students who were able to travel (one got sick) up to Anchorage where we competed with upwards of 30 teams from all across the state of Alaska! The organizers were very happy to see more Southeast Alaska teams and were very welcoming to us. The students presented their project idea and robot design to another round of judges, then spent every possible moment on the designated practice tables to fine tune their robot's performance. The Galactic Dories made a huge showing in the first round and launched to 2nd place, letting the state know that we meant business! Unfortunately, while the Galactic Dories were able to improve their scores in the later rounds, other teams were able to dial in just that much more and jumped ahead in the standings. At the end of the 3rd round, we were now in 7th place, but were still good enough to be invited to a bonus Top 8 exhibition while the award ceremony was being set up.

While we didn't take any trophies home from Anchorage, Ketchikan Charter School students and coaches were invigorated by how well our program performed at our first state level competition, and are very excited to return and place higher next year!

